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**Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee of
Jennifer Widness, President
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
February 15, 2017**

On behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges I am submitting testimony on the Governor's budget recommendations pertaining to the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program as well as the proposed consolidation of the Office of Higher Education into the State Department of Education.

First, I want to start by saying thank you for your ongoing support of independent colleges in Connecticut by maintaining funding for need-based financial aid through the Governor's Scholarship Program, now the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program, despite significant fiscal challenges over the past few years. Of note, despite strong legislative support for *funding* of the program, the allocation for Connecticut students attending Connecticut independent colleges has been reduced by 60% in just two years. (see Figures 1 & 2 below)

While I understand fiscal challenges remain, our economy cannot withstand further reductions to this program as it is critical to combat the state's "brain drain" and the need to retain more talent. As Figure 3 below shows, compared to our neighboring states, we are the only state in the region that has a net loss of college-going high school students on an annual basis.

The best investment the state can make in an effort to turn this statistic around is to increase our investment in need-based aid that supports Connecticut students attending Connecticut higher education institutions – public or private. As the testimony from our member institutions illustrate, decreases in state financial aid decreases their capacity to entice Connecticut students to enroll and remain in state. In many cases we are losing these students not to our state colleges and universities but to out of state institutions where the likelihood of them returning to Connecticut upon graduation is slim.

The more Connecticut students we can retain to attend college here the more will stay upon graduation. Recent data compiled through P20 WIN shows that the

Albertus Magnus College
Connecticut College
Fairfield University
Goodwin College
Mitchell College
Quinnipiac University
Rensselaer at Hartford
Sacred Heart University
St. Vincent's College
Trinity College
University of Bridgeport
University of Hartford
University of New Haven
University of Saint Joseph
Wesleyan University
Yale University

percentage of graduates that stay in state to work upon graduation correlates more with the percentage of Connecticut residents that enroll at the institution than the *type* of institution (see Figure 4 below). University of St. Joseph and Goodwin College graduates are employed in Connecticut at a higher rate than the CSCU's and Community Colleges graduates. The University of Hartford graduates are employed in Connecticut at a rate only ten percentage points lower than UConn. If more Connecticut students had the opportunity to enroll in the University of Hartford, more students would stay.

We understand that very significant fiscal challenges remain but for the reasons outlined above, along with many other, we need to maintain funding for the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program. Students and their families, as well as the state's economy, cannot afford further reductions to this important program.

I also wanted to provide my support for the Governor's proposal to move the Office of Higher Education (OHE) into the State Department of Education. As part of this move, the membership of the Planning Commission for Higher Education will be revised to include leaders from both public and private colleges in this state. The Commission will be charged with working with OHE to implement the Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education, developed by the Commission in 2015, and to work together to find opportunities for collaboration among public and private colleges.

This vision is what Connecticut needs during these trying economic times. We need higher education institutions working together to meet the needs of the state's workforce and to ensure opportunities for partnership are seized upon. We look forward to working with our public counterparts on this renewed vision for OHE and hope the legislature will support it.

Funding for State Financial Aid Programs: FY 07 - FY 16

Source: OFA Budget Books & OHE

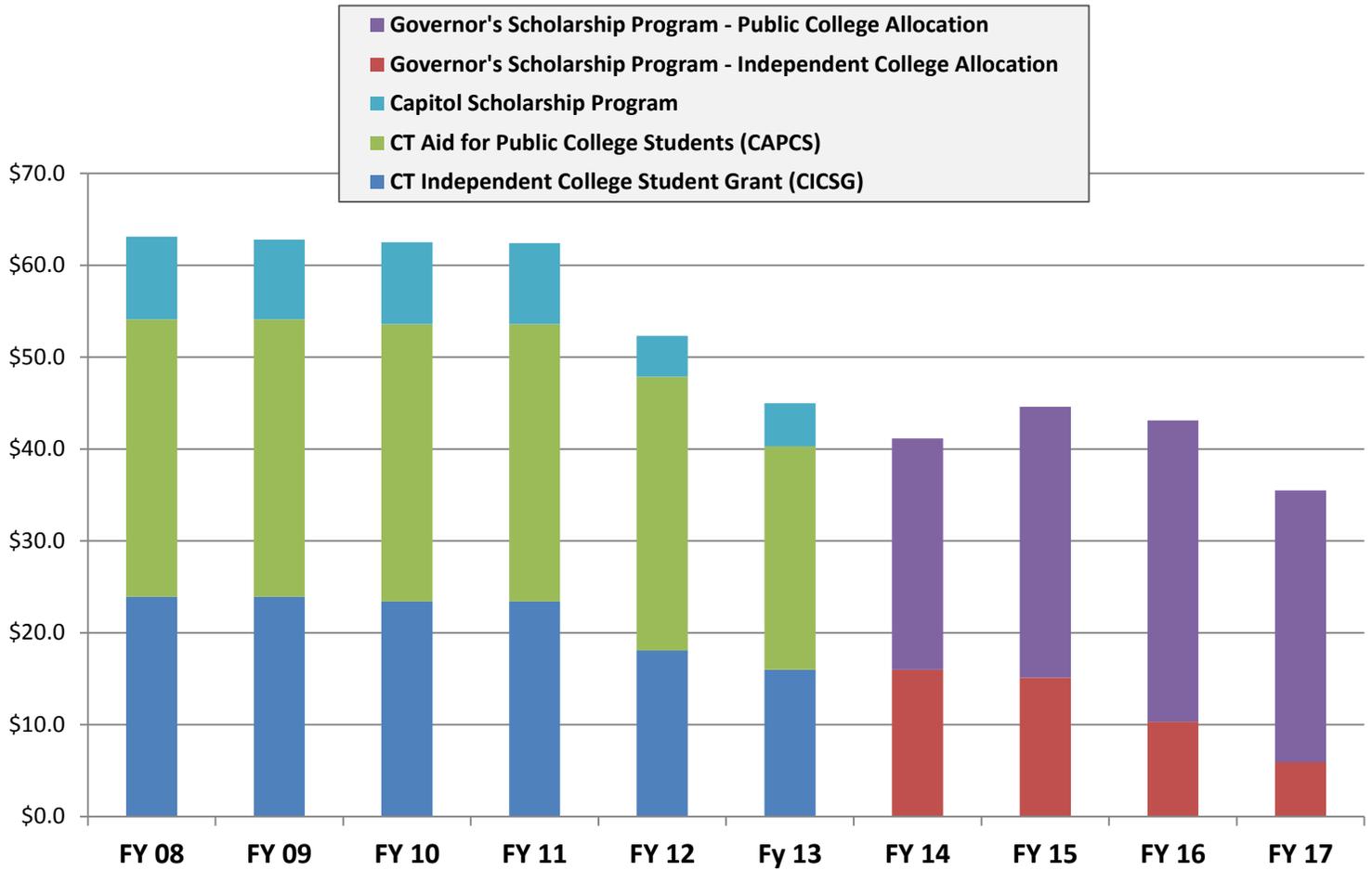


FIGURE 1: In FY 11, CT students attending the state’s 15 independent colleges received over \$20 million in need-based aid. In FY 17, CT students attending independent colleges received less than \$6 million in need-based aid.

State Need-based Aid Awarded to CT Undergraduates at CCIC Member Institutions: FY 10 to FY 17

Source: OHE

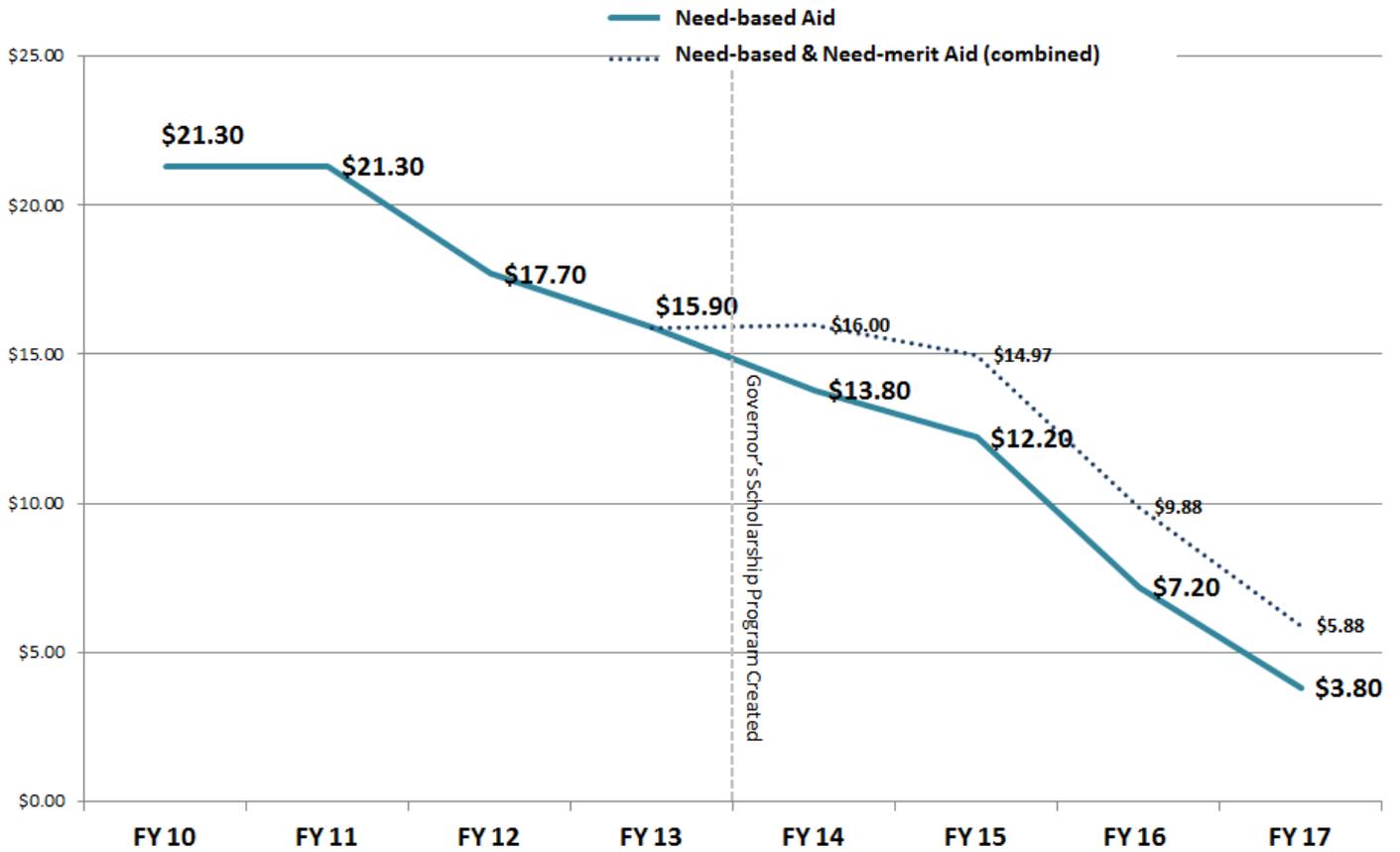


FIGURE 2: Under the consolidated state financial aid program, CT students attending CT independent colleges have received less and less state funded need-based aid.

Net Migration of College-Going High-School Students in the Northeast: Fall 2014

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

■ MA ■ RI ■ CT ■ NY

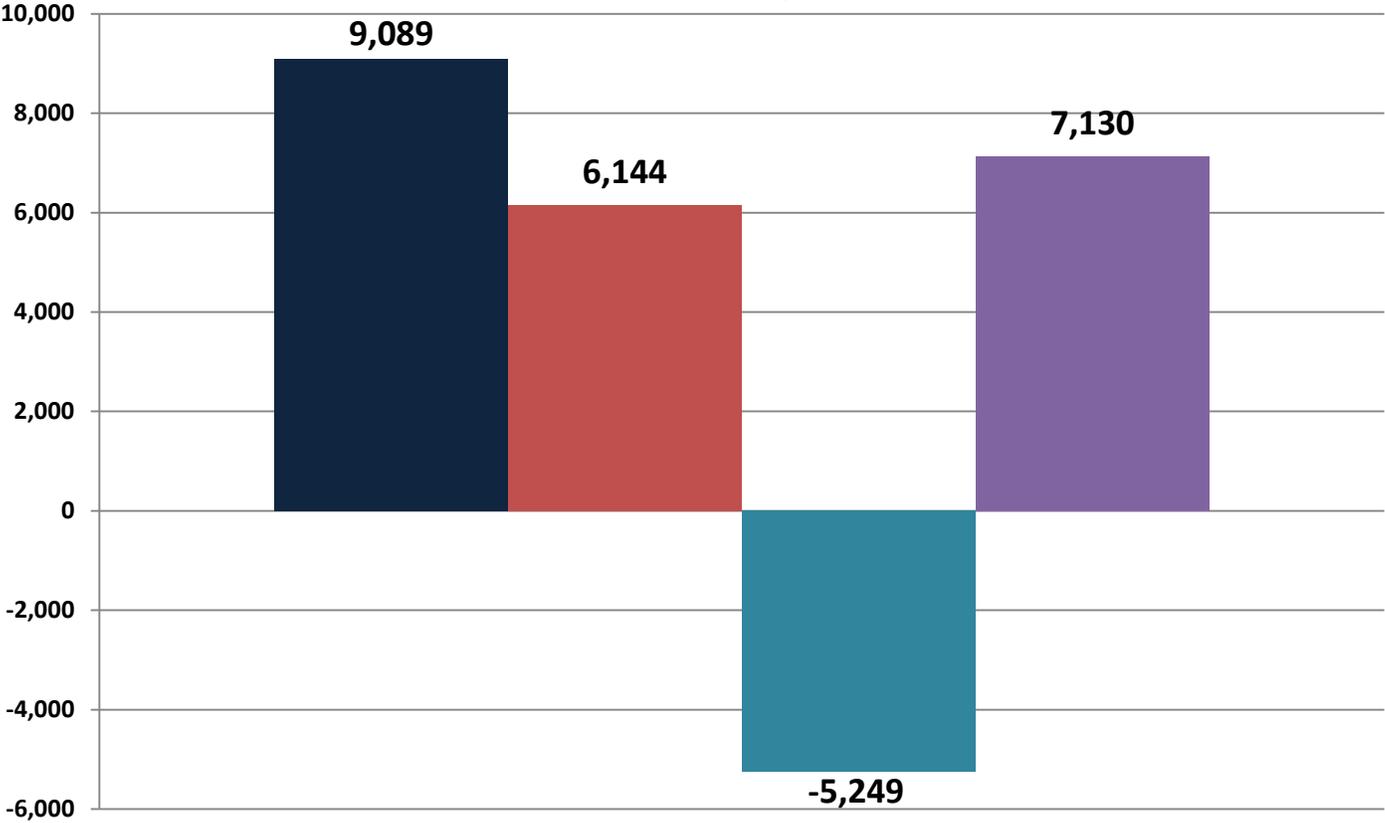


FIGURE 3: CT is the only state in the region that loses more college-going students than it brings in. 10,470 students came to CT to enroll in our higher ed institutions in 2014 – 70% of those students enrolled in our independent colleges. See [here](#) for more details.

Percent of CT Residents Enrolled in an Institution Compared to Percent of Graduates from that Institution Working in CT 3 Quarters After Graduation

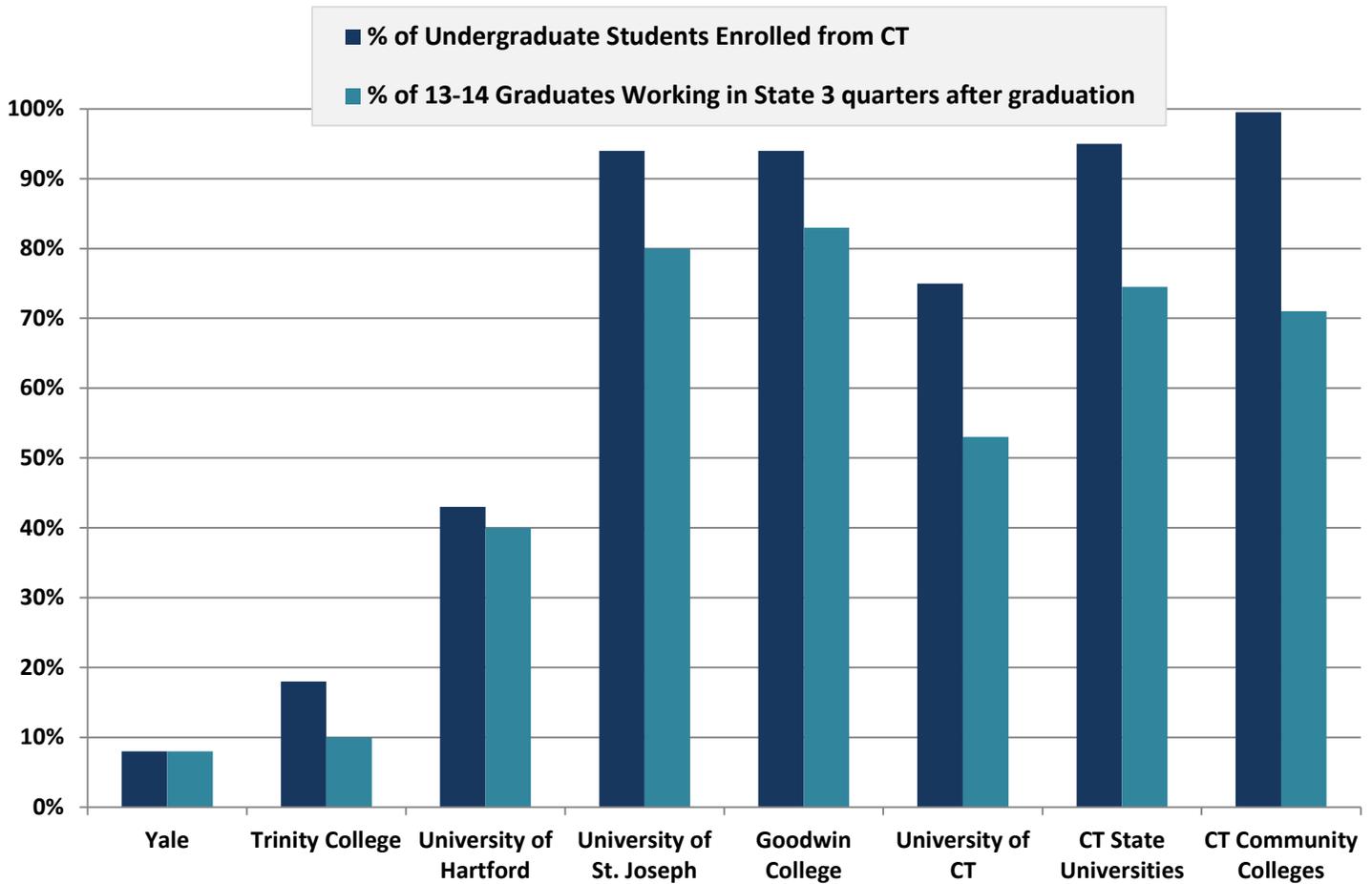


FIGURE 4: The percent of graduates that stay in CT to work upon graduation correlates more to the percent of CT students that enroll at the institution than whether that institution is public or private.